

ILLUSTRATION FLOCKS AS A MEANS TO IMPROVE AND INCREASE SHEEP BREEDING IN ONTARIO.

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The Ontario Sheep Breeders' Association, realizing the great value sheep have on nearly every farm, and noticing with alarm the discarding of the flock from the majority of farms, determined to take active means to stay the further damaging course.

The cry of "dogs," often a real menace to the business, and especially so to the careless man, led some to sell their sheep. Another far more meaningless cry, one usually heard from dairymen, viz., "Sheep are hard on grass," did untold mischief. Sheep are hard on grass only when 12 cows are put in a pasture with but feed for 10, and next a flock of sheep is turned in with the cows. Then the sheep will have the best of it, but who is to blame? The dairyman or the sheep? We know that sheep will give a far larger return in hard cash for the grass they eat and the labor needed to care for them than any other kind of live stock on the farm. And next, when we consider how useful the flock is in ridding land of weeds, we wonder how people can be so thoughtless in getting rid of their best animal friend. As to dogs, which are a pure nuisance ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the miserable half-starved curs which do the mischief should not drive manly men out of a profitable line of work. It is a very easy matter to construct dog-proof wire-netting and movable enclosures in which the flock may be secured at night. The labor in closing them in in the evening and opening the gate in the morning, which a small boy can do, is not half the work which milking one cow would require.

The remedy our association decided on was to have eight flocks of good common grade ewes, selected at different points in our Province, 10 to 12 in each flock, with a ram. There was one ram of each of our eight mutton breeds selected, and these were furnished by the Department of Agriculture free of cost to the flock owner. A bonus of \$3 per ewe is to be given to each experimenter, the free use of the ram as stated, and at the end of the two years of trial the ram becomes the property of the farmer.

In return for the bonus and the ram's service the flock owner is to keep an account of cost of feed, and the annual returns from sale of wool and lambs reared, which will be published in bulletin form. To meet the demands of different markets, one flock was established

near Toronto to furnish the high-priced early lamb for the city trade. Another flock was located in Muskoka in the Summer Tourist country to provide high-class summer finished lambs for the many who pass a few weeks or months in that delightful resort. The other six flocks were chosen with a view to having the lambs drop in late April or early May, to carry on into the following winter and be finished for the general market in March or April when the fat lambs make good money.

Colonel McEwen and the writer, who were appointed to select the flocks and rams, and to superintend the work, as well as to give suggestions regarding the care, etc., found the people deeply interested, and we look forward to the demonstrations being one of the means by which a great revival of the industry may be secured in the near future.

Another means toward the same end is now being put in practice by Doctor Rutherford, our Dominion Live Stock Commissioner. The American quarantine regulations whereby it was determined to subject Canadian sheep going into the States for breeding purposes to a stay of thirty days at the lines, with no provision made to house or to properly care for them, practically stopped a trade which was profitable to breeders in both countries. In Ontario we had a surplus of excellent breeding rams, while the other provinces east and west were in dire need of such to improve their existing flocks. Last month the department, under Doctor Rutherford's supervision, gathered carloads of the surplus at Toronto, had them shipped to the points where needed, and there sold at auction to the highest bidders. The breeders furnishing the stock are to receive in full, without any deduction for cost of shipping, whatever their animals will bring, the department footing all costs.

These actions show clearly the determination of the sheep breeders of Ontario to push their business. We have here the best conditions known in the wide world for raising sheep. No other country can show so clear a bill of health; nor can any land or its people put into open competition sheep which will secure the highest honors in the breeding and fat classes as the breeders of our Dominion's honored Province—Ontario—can do and have done time and again.

Because of such exceptional conditions as feeds, climate, and especially shepherds, our work has already produced gratifying results, but it is only the faint dawning of what we are going to strive for and fully expect to accomplish.